1: Powdermaker E-5 (1929-1930) 1933 OM10 New Ireland OM10
Lesu

cement leaves, coconut, taro, and so on for four layers. The outer leaves are then wrapped around it to make a bundle, which is tied with vine and baked in the *liga*. All the preparations for the cooking of the *beta*, except the scraping of the taro, is done by the men. It is eaten by both sexes and much enjoyed.

In the past snakes were also eaten. They were killed by beating them on the head, and then cut up, wrapped in leaves, and baked in the *liga*, and were considered good food. To-day, however, it would be considered dangerous to eat a snake, because of the part it played in the Garden of Eden story, as told by the missionaries. In some vague and unexplainable way the snake is now considered a taboo food, even among unmissionized natives. They may not have accepted any of the Christian morals or tenets, or even know much about them, but the snake story they take seriously, and it is the snake which stands out as a prominent part of the Fall of Man.

Other Cooking

There is only one leaf, *mutil*, resembling a spinach leaf, which is cooked. Recently some of those who have worked on a plantation have brought home with them a saucepan, and the leaf is boiled, together with the milk of the coconut and the shredded coconut. In the past it was wrapped in other leaves and baked in the *liga*.

Unripe bananas are buried in the sand for a week. They are left on the stalk and laid in a trench-like hole on the sandy beach and then covered over with sand. The result is a very soft squashy banana, preferred by natives to the raw one. It is prepared in this way for a feast, but on ordinary occasions the raw banana is eaten.

Pawpaws are usually eaten raw, although they are sometimes baked in the *liga*. Other fruits are eaten raw.

In the past these natives were cannibals, but they ate only

1: Powdermaker E-5 (1929-1930) 1933 OM10 New Ireland OM10
Lesu

their enemies killed in warfare. I was told that the dead body was wrapped in leaves and baked in the *liga*, just as is other food. The adults who had tasted human flesh said that they enjoyed it, and there appeared, as far as I could ascertain, to be no idea of imbibing any spiritual qualities. It was merely another meat dish.

HOUSE-BUILDING

House-building is a masculine occupation, and is carried on whenever it is necessary to build a new house or mend an old one. A house lasts from two to three years, although the roof will have to be mended during this interval. A new house will be built quite close to where the old one stands. Should a man choose, he can move some distance away to another hamlet, although this is not done very frequently. During my visit one man and his wife moved from the hamlet of Onel to Penguli, because the man had quarrelled with his wife's relatives at Onel, and because he wanted to live close to a man who was a good friend of his at Penguli. Since there is no individual ownership of land, a man may build on any unoccupied piece of ground.

Before building a new house a man will first make sure that his gardens are in good condition and that he has plenty of taro with which to feed his assistants. Assured of this, he will go to the bush and cut down some hard-wood trees for posts. Putting the posts in the ground in a straight line is a skilled job and not every man can do it. There were ten men in a village of two hundred and thirty people who were skilled in this. If a man is not able to do it he gets one of these skilled men to mark off the ground in a straight line with a vine and place sticks where the posts are to be put. The future owner of the house will then put up the frame, the posts and cross-beams; then all the men in his immediate community—his own hamlet and near-by ones—assist him in bringing in leaves from the bush for the thatched roof,

2: Powdermaker E-5 (1929-30) 1931 OM10 New Ireland OM10
Lesu

the *tinuato* wanders around near the place of death and makes its presence known by a low whistle. Although it has no malignant qualities, it is regarded with great fear.

There is no belief in life after death (except for the ghost), in rewards or punishments, or in any deity. It is interesting to observe that for the missionised native it is the *tinuato* which goes to hell, and it is this also which has become the Christian soul.

These people, until very recently, were cannibals. All the adults of the community in which I lived had been cannibals before the white government stopped the practice. But it was only the bodies of enemies killed in warfare which were eaten, and never the body of a friend, relative, or member of the same village. As far as could be ascertained, there was no theory of imbibing the strength of the enemy warrior. It was merely another meat dish in a diet which was mostly vegetable.[4]

Cremation rather than burial was formerly practised, but as far as could be learned there has been no change in the rites. In the past the body was burned and the bones buried. The cemeteries existed then just as they do to-day—each hamlet with its own. In the rites to-day cremation is simply omitted and the whole body is buried instead of just the bones, as in the past.[5]

The following description, covering the three chronological periods, brings out the divisions among the survivors who are grouped according to their kinship to the dead person, their degree of mourning and their responsibility for the rites.

PREPARATIONS BEFORE DEATH

In the period immediately preceding death there is even then a selection of certain relatives who will perform special duties towards the dying person. It is always the parents or children who take care of the sick person. Before death occurs, it is to the house of the parents or children that the patient is moved. The spouse is very attentive also, and the rest of the community show their interest by cooking in the hamlet of the sick person and by dis-

[4] However, one can never completely trust information gathered from hearsay only, and with no opportunity to observe the phenomenon itself.

[5] White control is responsible for the change.